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ABSTRACT

Students are exposed to group interaction long before they reach the college classroom through their living, social, and educational groups. As a result, they bring preconceived notions about group interaction effectiveness. Students also receive a great deal of exposure to group interaction from television. Situation comedies, students' favorite television format, rely heavily on group interaction. A study explored the televised group interaction prototype by: (1) examining the similarities and differences between what is taught as group communication and what is seen as group interaction on television; (2) reviewing data from college-age television viewers for evidence of television's effect; and (3) describing how televised group interaction can be used in teaching group communication. The 250 participants in the study were enrolled in basic public speaking classes at a medium size private southern university. Students were randomly scheduled to viewing times and either watched an episode of "Cheers" or "The Golden Girls." Results indicated that: (1) subjects reported seeing a good deal of group interaction that is realistic with similarities to real life groups; (2) the relational group interaction on "The Golden Girls" was rated more like the interaction of real groups than the problems solving group interaction on "Cheers." Findings suggest that students may place primary emphasis on relational needs in their groups, which may be the reason the students are dissatisfied with their task groups. (One table of data is included; an appendix listing aspects of interaction type analysis is attached. Contains 30 references.) (Author/RS)

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SITUATION COMEDIES IN THE GROUP COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

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Students are exposed to group interaction long before they reach our college classrooms through their living, social, and educational groups. As a result, they bring preconceived notions about group interaction effectiveness. Students also receive a great deal of exposure to group interaction from television. Situation comedies, students' favorite TV format, rely heavily on group interaction. This essay explores the televised group interaction prototype by examining the similarities and differences between what we teach as group communication and what is seen as group interaction on television; reviewing data from college age television viewers for evidence of television's effect; and describing how televised group interaction can be used in teaching group communication.

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SITUATION COMEDIES IN THE GROUP COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

Teaching group communication skills in the college classroom can be difficult because students come with preconceived notions about group work. Teaching aids provide assistance. But, generally, the assistance is variation on group outcomes (to construct the course final exam, to discuss a vital campus issue in front of other class members, to present an instructional workshop on some issue of group communication, to solve some campus problem, and so on), or group simulations. Over time, I have accumulated a folder of group tasks--paces I can put my group communication students through so they will have a better understanding and appreciation for the process and product of group interaction.

A more systematic approach to teaching group communication has recently been published. Phillips (1990a) has edited a compilation of essays which emphasizes the "problems of teaching participants in small group decision making and problem solving how to communicate in order to improve the quality of group output" (p. 1). Working from the base assumption that individual performance affects the quality of group output, Kelly and Phillips (1990) describe the pedagogical mission as: (1) instruction focusing on performance skills, (2) instruction under realistic conditions, and (3) instruction training students to analyze the groups they are in. I highly recommend this book for small group instructors. My only concern is the book's sole focus on task--group problem solving and group decision making.

Recently, I've started to explore other aspects of group communication and consider their relevance to the college level course in group communication. The motivation for my search lies squarely in students' perception of groups. Regularly as an introduction to the course taught at the undergraduate level, I've asked students to list their perceptions of groups. Overwhelmingly, they have told me that: 1) they

dislike groups, 2) they tend to get *stuck* in groups where they must do the work for other individuals, and 3) they find it difficult to accomplish their personal objectives *and* the group's objective. Jarboe (1990) echoes my informal data collection: "Students come with their own group experiences that have shaped their attitudes and created their assumptions about groups" (p. 16).

Where do students get negative, and likely ineffective, views of this interaction context that will follow them throughout their social and professional lives? Unfortunately, most students have been in many other class groups long before they come to the small group classroom. And, typically, they have had their grade held hostage by other group members. Groups have long been used as a teaching technique, often due to limited resources and typically without the benefit of instruction in group process. Beginning in elementary school, students work cooperative learning groups to help teach one another. A student(s) proficient in the subject matter is teamed with other students to create a learning environment. The education literature promotes the cooperative learning concept; yet, a thorough search of the same literature reveals no method or procedure for instructing students how to work in groups.

Our discipline provides little advice for elementary level teachers, usually the first persons responsible for introducing students to task groups. SCA's recently published *Guidelines for Developing Oral Communication Curricula in Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade* (1991) does not identify group discussion as an oral communication competency until the fifth grade. For comparison, cooperative learning principles were clearly designed for and are being used at the primary grade levels. These educators must work from what Phillips (1990b)calls the common myth about group process: "that people know innately how to perform in small groups. The corollary is that if you put people together in small groups and assign them something to do, they will learn how to perform well" (p. 270-271).

Who Really Teaches Students About Groups?

Given these educational deficiencies, we have to ask ourselves: Who teaches students how to be group members before they come to our classroom? Certainly, one can point to the natural group experiences students encounter on their journey through life--the groups that exist in living units, school and church groups, and sports activities. Another potential teacher of group interaction is television. I believe that we underestimate the effect of television groups on students and thus fail to regard it as an effective teaching technique in teaching group communication. From *Sesame Street* to Saturday morning cartoons, preschoolers are exposed to groups of characters living, working, and playing together. For older primary school children, *Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles* and other action figures provide group prototypes. As children grow older and develop afternoon and evening television watching habits, there are continually exposed to group situations. Shows syndicated for afternoon viewing like *The Cosby Show*, *Charles in Charge*, and *The Brady Bunch* show living groups in a variety of task and relational situations. Evening television also uses the group as a facilitator for prime time fare. Shows like *Major Dad*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Roseanne* use the group as a facilitator of plot lines. Adults continue to be exposed to the televised group prototype as most situation comedies and evening dramas reflect group scenarios.

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains that observing the behaviors of others can have an effect on the behaviors one chooses. Gerbner's Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986), explores the influence television has on students' understanding and acceptance of group interaction. Students' exposure to televised group experiences may be far more reaching than we expect.

In 1984 Furman used Social Learning Theory to examine television's modeling effect on children's peer relations and friendships. In an effort to help

students develop more competency, students shown a film depicting positive relationships increased their positive social skills. Later, Schrag (1991) examined the pedagogical implications of children's television and found that television acted as a narrative device in providing standards by which children judge their experiences. If left unexamined, children tend to pick up the narrative shown on television as "correct." Without an alternative model or the skills or incentive for critical examination, the televised group prototype could become, by default, the standard that shapes group expectations for children.

Greenberg, Hines, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Atkin (1980), Buerkel-Rothfuss, Greenberg, Atkin, and Neuendorf (1982), and Skill, Wallace & Cassata (in press) examined televised family portrayals and found that programming "does have the potential to provide information about how a family should communicate" (Greenberg, et al., 1980, p. 158). The limited time in which televised groups have to initiate, develop, and resolve the conflicts that are central to sitcom plot development forces producers to rely heavily on communicative behavior that is easy to encode and decode. Watkins (1985) points out that television viewing is a dominant activity and that "there is considerable consistency in the social values portrayed within the media messages received through television" (p. 329). Chesebro (1991) argues that popular television series provide a stable repertoire of demonstrated values that can act as subtle persuasion on both behavior and attitudes. Television's heavy reliance on group interaction as the vehicle for demonstrating values is likely to carry some implicit message about group interaction to the viewing public. The highly repetitive medium of situation comedy in both content and format is widely accepted and expected. Thus, the format and its context cuts across demographic boundaries by leveling cultural, economic, and educational differences (Hirsch, 1982) to provide a relatively stable model of group behavior which is readily available.

The vicarious learning effect should be acknowledged and taken into account when designing group communication instruction. Television groups provide a consistent prototype which has become part of America's mainstream popular culture. To explore the instructional implications of television's group interaction, this paper is divided into three sections. First, this essay will identify some of the core similarities and differences between what we teach as group communication and what is seen as group interaction on television. Second, data from college age television viewers will be used as evidence of the televised group effect. Third, how instructors can use television shows in teaching group communication will be discussed.

Similarities and Differences between Reality and Television

To effectively use televised group interaction as an instructional method, it helps to critically examine how closely the televised prototype matches reality. First, the similarities. Televised groups meet Shaw's (1976) definition of group communication: 1) three or more individuals, 2) a perception among interactants that they belong to the group; 3) face-to-face interaction; 4) interactants are dependent upon one another; and 5) interactants work together for a common goal. More importantly, televised groups are not zero-history groups, but groups with pasts, presents, and futures. The kind of groups we live, work, and play in are reflected on television.

With respect to the type of interaction that groups engage in, Kelly and Phillips (1990) explain that

> real groups are confronted with problems like how to integrate new members into the group, how to deal with the departure of crucial members, how to produce the final product, and how to disband the group; this in addition to the ongoing problems of how to talk to one another, how to resolve conflict, how to prevent disruptive digressions, and how to deal with members who are not doing their share. (p. 6)

As examples of these group situations, in the '91-92 season opener the remaining cast of *Designing Women* had to adapt to two new members of their work group. Previously, many of us have lamented as the group on *Barney Miller* lost Jack Soo. We watch the team at FYI produce a news show on *Murphy Brown*. We've watched the characters on *M*A*S*H* deal with loss as their unit disbands. We are frequent drop-ins on the Connor family of *Roseanne* as they resolve the ongoing problems of relating with one another. The townspeople of Sicily, Alaska frequently come together in meetings, formal and informal, to resolve conflict. We laugh as each character on *Cheers* hones his or her special style of encouraging the group to digress from the topic of conversation. And, finally, Claire and Cliff Huxtable of *The Cosby Show* frequently reprimand their children when they fail to satisfy their share of family responsibility. If Kelly and Phillips' description of real group interaction is accepted, then we must also accept that the groups we view on television display the same interaction characteristics.

Groups that meet the interaction criteria above incorporate task and relational dimensions into their interaction. As in real groups, relational needs are frequent stumbling blocks for televised groups. Also similar are the task, relational, and individual roles (e.g., Brilhart & Galanes, 1989, p. 174-177) that group members develop in interaction.

The similarities between real and televised groups seem basic enough to use televised groups as representatives of real groups. Yet, we need to examine the essential differences that exist as well.

Television must entertain. To that end, televised groups are seldom seen as effective. Since the communication discipline has long had as its goal improving group effectiveness (Jarboe, 1990), it is essential to note this negative aspect of the televised prototype. Similarly, because television must create humor, televised groups find themselves in awkward, and sometimes, unreal, situations. Jarboe comments

"our television situation comedies are often about groups of people who, while they have their individual concerns, are struggling to be effective. We chuckle at the mishaps on *WKRP* and *M*A*S*H*" (p. 35). Because television's goal is to entertain, the task considerations of televised groups are frequently limited. Generally, the group task or problem must be resolved within the 23 air minutes writers have at their disposal. As a result, relevised group interaction is generlaly more relationally oriented.

The sitcom format forces other unrealistic parameters upon televised group interaction. While real groups engage in sustained and lengthy interaction, televised group interaction is choppy and frequently interspersed with scenes of non-group interaction.

Another major difference is the type of groups depicted on television. The communication discipline has traditionally used the decision making group as its focus for teaching and research. Thus, the groups we use in teaching and research have clear boundaries, tasks, and goals. While these types of groups are shown on television, more frequently televised groups are primary groups with living and friendship orientations rather than task orientations as the major focus. As a result, televised groups are more informal than the groups we use as the basis of our research. Certainly, the relational groups depicted on television do have tasks to accomplish and problems to solve, but that is not their primary reason for being a group.

A major distinction between real and televised groups is the nature of their interaction sequencing. The televised format prevents group members from talking over one another and side conversations from developing--both frequent occurrences in real world groups. Apparently we have become so acculturated to the polite turn taking sequencing that occurs in televised groups that few viewers question its representativeness. Perhaps the non-overlapping prototypical group interaction we

see portrayed on television contributes to the frustration many of us feel when our interaction in groups is stepped on and over.

Acknowledging these differences, televised group interaction can still be useful for descriptive, analytical, and prescriptive exercises. It is easy to point to the obvious similarities and differences, but there are some group characteristics which cannot clearly be labeled as similarities or differences.

Due in part to the relational nature of televised groups, and, in part, to the entertainment goal of television (particularly sitcoms), televised group interaction relies heavily on stories and personal narratives to move the group interaction along. Some would identify this as a strong difference from more formally organized task groups. However, if you teach sophomores, you may recognize the similarity. Frequently, student work groups get sidetracked on personal issues and personal agendas by the story telling nature of their interaction. This aspect of group communication has been explored by Bormann (1985, 1986) and identified as fantasy themes and fantasy chaining. Recent research, however, has turned from the narrative focus of group interaction to emphasize the ability of groups to make effective decisions.

Another characteristic difficult to establish as a similarity or a difference is a group's focus on immediate behavior. Televised groups are frequently centered around immediate behavior and reaction with little attention to the longer term consequence of the group's interaction. Again, working with student groups, this is often one of their devices of failure. While immediacy must be an issue for a group, most effective work groups do not lose sight of their continuing relationships with one another or the group's longer term task or problem.

What College Students See in Televised Group Interaction

Besides recognizing the similarities and differences between real and televised group interaction, we should also look at what students bring with them from their

television viewing experiences. A recently completed study of college television viewers sought to answer the following questions:

1. Do viewers recognize group interaction in the sitcom format?

2. What attributes of group interaction are salient ?

3. Are viewers prone to pick up negative rather than positive attributes about group interaction?

4. How do the group experiences of viewers compare to the fictional televised group experience?

Subjects

Participants in the study were students enrolled in basic public speaking classes at a medium size private Southern university. Of the 250 subjects, 65% were female and 35% were male. Over 70% were freshmen and more then 90% represented the 17-20 traditional college age group. The courses from which students were drawn are general education requirements for most majors.

In reporting their television viewing habits, students overwhelmingly identified situation comedies (67%) as their most frequently watched television shows. The next most frequently mentioned shows were one hour dramas and soap operas, both with rely heavily on group interaction.

All participants reported having interaction experience in group situations. Most frequently they identified group interaction in university service organizations, extracurricular activities, and sports. The least frequent groups identified were family, friends, and work groups. In a Likert scale question, participants reported that they participated as members of groups slightly more than an average amount. However, they reported that their experiences were mixed--some good and some bad. About half of the students (56.2%) had had some formal classroom training in group interaction.

Procedures

Students were randomly scheduled to viewing times and either watched an episode of *Cheers* (n=142) or *The Golden Girls*. (n=108). These two shows were among the shows students reported they watched and liked. These two episodes were selected because of their contrasting representation of group interaction. The *Cheers* episode promoted a task oriented view of group interaction as the group at Sam's bar helps Sam find Rebecca's missing earrings. The regulars at the bar are drawn into Sam's problem solving dilemma early in the episode. Sam and Rebecca have both been invited to a charity gala; both get phone calls cancelling their dates. Sam goes ahead to the event and comes back with Admiral Crowe, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff. Rebecca stays at the bar dressed in her evening gown because she likes how she looks. Rebecca had borrowed a pair of diamond earrings to make an impression at the gala. She is careless and leaves the earrings in a tumbler on her desk. The Admiral uses her office to make a phone call. Later, Rebecca notices that the earrings are missing and accuses the Admiral of stealing the earrings. Rebecca promises Sam that she will do anything to get the earrings back. Sam jumps on the opportunity and engages both the regular customers and his work colleagues in helping him find the earrings. The group interaction accounts for 14:44 minutes of the episode.

The *Golden Girls* promoted a socio-emotional aspect of group interaction as Rose, Dorothy, and Blanche use the group to relate stories about their pasts and to make decisions about household chores. Although it is clear that the three characters are deciding what chores to do, the audience never sees the group carry through a decision. Rather, a pattern is set up with the threesome digressing from their task activity by sharing stories. When the group starts to get gets back to their task, the scene shifts to the other plot. When the action returns to Rose, Dorothy, and Blanche, the task from previous scene has been completed off camera. They talk very

minimally about what to do next and then digress by sharing personal stories. The group's interaction accounts for 17:52 minutes of the episode.

Results

Of those who viewed *Cheers*, 52.11% indicated that they saw quite a bit of group interaction; 38.83% reported lots of group interaction. Of those who viewed *The Golden Girls*, 50.46% reported they saw quite a bit of group interaction; 24.77% reported lots of group interaction.

Of the students watching *Cheers,* 41.55% reported that the show was a fairly realistic portrayal of group interaction. Another 39.44% reported that some of the group interaction was not realistic while other aspects were realistic. Of the students watching *The Golden Girls*, 34.58% reported that the show was a fairly realistic portrayal of group interaction; 26.17% reported that the interaction was very realistic. Another 33.33% reported that some of the group interaction was realistic while other aspects of the group interaction were not realistic. No viewer identified the interaction of either sitcom as unrealistic.

In another reality comparison question, 68.79% of the students who watched *Cheers* indicated the episode they saw had some similarities to real life group interaction. For those who watched *The Golden Girls*, 59.81% reported that the episode they saw had some similarities to real life group interaction; 20.56% reported that this TV group and real groups were very much alike. Finally, participants were asked if they expected to see people and situations like themselves in the situation comedies they watched on TV. Over 63% of those who watched *Cheers* indicated that they sometimes have these expectations while 21.28% reported that they did expect to see a parallel. Of those who watched *The Golden Girls*, 58.33% reported that they sometimes have these expectations while another 36.11% reported that they did expect to see a parallel. These data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Perceptions of Televised Group Interaction

	Cheers	Golden Girls
Amount of Group Interaction		
Quite a bit	52.11%	50.46%
Lots	38.83%	24.77%
Realistic Portrayal		
Very realistic		26.17%
Fairly realistic	41.55%	34.58%
Yes and no	39.44%	33.33%
Similar to Real Groups		
Very similar		20.56%
Some similarities	68.79%	59.81%
Like Themselves		
Sometimes	63.00%	58.33%
Very parallel	21.28%	36.11%

When asked to define group interaction prior to viewing the sitcoms, students wrote (in order of frequency) that groups (1) interacted or discussed a (2) common goal or purpose while (3) sharing ideas, skills, and knowledge. These open ended responses are consistent with accepted definitions of groups and their interaction.

When asked to describe the group interaction they viewed, the two viewing groups reported different elements. Those watching *Cheers* reported seeing (1) friends (2) trying to accomplish a group task (3) while teasing, joking and laughing with one another. Those watching *The Golden Girls* saw the group members (1) sharing feelings and talking over the events of the day. They (2) reported this group specifically using character names and labeled the specific relationships among this group of characters. They also reported (3) the characters as working together to help one another.

In summary, students frequently watch situation comedies that use group interaction as the vehicle for the story line; students like this television genre. Students believe that group interaction in situation comedies is fairly realistic to the group interaction they encounter in their daily lives. Moreover, students expect to see group situations on television parallel their own group interaction activities.

From their pre-viewing responses, it appears that there is a general collective memory in our culture for what a group is and how a group operates. Having formal group instruction did not alter the definitions students gave indicating that the collective group memory is common and available in our popular culture.

Predictive Tests

Outcome measures for the study were: amount of televised group interaction and realism of televised group interaction. Predictor variables were: sex, TV viewing habits, level of past group participation, evaluation of past group participation, previous exposure to the episode, and previous group instruction. The show viewed was the moderating variable. Significant differences were only attributable to the show watched; no other variable predicted the outcome measures. Student viewers responded differently to the two shows. Regarding the amount of televised group interaction, *Cheers* viewers reported more group interaction (mean=3.18) than the *Golden Girls* viewers (mean=2.93) ($F=5.81$, $p.= .0167$). Regarding realism of televised group interaction, *Golden Girls* viewers reported that show as more realistic (mean=2.78) than the viewers of *Cheers* (mean=2.44) ($F=9.15$, $p. =.0028$).

More importantly, these data show that students having a course in group communication do not perceive televised group interaction differently from those students who have not had such a course. This points to the significant modeling effects televised group interaction has on building student expectations about such interaction.

Discussion

In summarizing the results, subjects reported seeing a good deal of group interaction that is realistic with similarities to real life groups. While reality comparison of both shows were moderately high, the group interaction on the *Golden Girls* was rated more like the interaction of the real groups with which students are acquainted. That students evaluated the two group interactions differently is interesting. The *Cheers* group is problem solving and task oriented. Viewers see the deliberations and actions of the group. The *Golden Girls* group is relational oriented. Viewers do not see the threesome discuss or complete their task activity. Viewers do see the group share stories with another. These results suggest that students may place primary emphasis on relational needs in their groups. This may be the reason students are dissatisfied with their task groups--the task takes precedent over the relational needs and challenges the relational prototype that students experience in their own primary groups and see on television.

This focus on relational needs may be explained by television's repetitive attention on values toward others. In Selnow's (1990) examination of prime time television, values toward self accounted for 26.3% of values displayed; values toward self and others accounted for 20.8% of values displayed. But, values toward others accounted for 49.4% of values displayed. More importantly, the most frequent value toward others displayed was the value of compassion for others (41.1%).

Instructional Techniques Using Televised Group Interaction

Situation comedies provide practical and easily accessible interaction for students to observe and analyze. Moreover, students (even those who don't watch that particular show) are familiar with the sitcom format, the types of groups represented, and the content and context of the groups. It is important when using a televised group to preview the show to establish the "groupness" displayed. To my surprise, some shows provide the illusion of being about groups without using much

group interaction. For example, other than the opening segment in *L.A. Law* where the attorneys gather around the conference table for their morning meeting, most of the other dialogue is dyadic.

Using television as an instructional device is similar to using film in the classroom. Shields and Kidd (1973) described their use of the film *The Poseidon Adventure* to teach students how to analyze group identity and group leadership. Proctor and Adler (1991) reviewed the use of film in teaching interpersonal communication. They advocate this instructional strategy because feature films heighten student interest in the subject matter, are a resource students are comfortable with, allow students to observe and evaluation interaction, and offer opportunities for discussion and personal assessment.

Television programming has major advantages over feature films. First, televised accounts of group interaction are more available in terms of practicality for the instructor and in terms of common interpretations of the text. Aden (1991) notes "television's popularity as a mass medium is due in part to its ability to produce stories that large audiences . . . find interesting" (p. 402). Thus, the context is more familiar to students so they can concentrate on what the group is doing rather than interpreting the text. The interaction typically follows the convention of establishment, complication, confusion, and resolution as its plot formula. The 30 minute sitcom format of televised group interaction is also more conducive to class time periods. The commercials provide a natural breaking point in the interaction to stop viewing and discuss issues. And, finally, with regard to topic sensitivity, there is less risk in showing publicly aired broadcast material that meets family viewing time censorship standards rather than showing films with questionable content.

Using sitcoms in the group communication classroom meets three educational objectives. First, televised group interaction generally depicts ineffective models. Showing students the ineffective model gives them many opportunities to critique the

interaction. Second, viewing and analyzing televised interaction prior to participating in and analyzing their own group interaction seems to result in more detailed self and group analyses. Finally, asking students to identify the similarities and differences between the televised interaction and their own group interaction experiences generates discussion.

Because televised group interaction focuses on ineffective communication, students need the opportunity to displace the negativity with more positive models. To combat this effect, students can work together as a group to rewrite scripts of the interaction they view to propose effective ways of handling the conflict or problem. Student groups can role play these new, improved scripts for others in the class. Because televised group interaction scenes are short, this rewrite procedure provides good practice for the students in developing positive interaction strategies.

Group interaction analysis provides another method for critiquing televised group interaction. Bales and Cohen's (1979) SYMLOG (A System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups) adjective rating technique is a method students find easy to use. Details for using the 26 adjective phrases to rate each character's interaction are detailed for instructors in the book and for students in the SYMLOG Case Study Kit (Bales, 1980) which also includes forms for rating group interaction. Basic information about the use of SYMLOG for analyzing group interaction is provided by Kelly and Duran (1992), Kelly, Kuehn, and McComb (1990), and Keyton and Wall (1989). Students quickly learn the three-dimensional theory underlying the SYMLOG method and find the field diagrams that result from the data collection helpful in their analyses and critiques. Having practiced observation and data reporting with televised group interaction gives students more confidence in analyzing their own group.

Another method for evaluating group interaction identifies the type of interaction, the referent of the communication message, the immediacy level of the

interaction, the direction of the interaction's evaluation, and the goal accomplishment of the interaction. This list of diagnostic elements was developed from research on televised group interaction and taped student work group interaction. Care was taken to develop a list of interaction types that fully represents an exhaustive and mutually exclusive list of interaction types. The full criteria list is shown as Appendix A.

Evaluating televised group outcomes can be accomplished using sets of questions developed by Gouran (1990). The sets of questions reflect criteria generated by the reflective thinking process, the problem solving sequence, the Program Evaluation and Review Technique, substantive behavior, and procedural activity. The questions allow students to see the faults of televised of group interaction, thus emphasizing the need for groups to adhere to standardized procedures.

Each of these instructional techniques using televised group interaction are well received by students. Using televised group interaction provides a common referent for class discussion. Group interaction is so common on TV that instructors can select scenes that reflect problems observed in student groups. This allows students to ask questions about strategies for resolving the problem without making direct or embarassing reference to their own group.

Summary

As college level instructors we are unable to change the group experiences or televised group stimuli students bring to our college classroom. We can, however, use televised group interaction as a teaching tool for more critical group analysis.

We must be sensitive to the preconceptions students bring to our group communication classrooms. We must understand students previous group expriences as well as the group prototypes students develop from watching televised group interaction. Our work in teaching students to communicate more effectively in groups will have more impact if we recognize students' point of view and work from that

perspective. While televised group interaction may be the basis of ineffective group models, it can be a used as an instructional vehicle to teach students how to critically observe and analyze group interaction.

Appendix A

Interaction Type Analysis

Interaction Type	Referent	Immediacy	Evaluative Direction	Goal (neutral) Directed?
Commenting/ Informing	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Story-telling	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Complaining	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Directing	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Managing Conflict	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Encouraging (supporting)	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Comparing	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Asking Opinion	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Analyzing/ Explaining	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No
Persuading	Self Group Individual in group External	Present Not present	Positive Negative Neutral	Yes No

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